



# *The Scarlet Letter*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

## IMITATION POEMS (SYMBOLISM)

### PROCEDURE

1. **Write a draft.** Just write it down! Focus on images, sound, lines, and meeting the requirements of the assignment you chose. Don't worry if it's not perfect– it's just a rough draft!
2. **Revise.** Read your poem aloud to see if the sound and rhythm work. Note the length of each line (is it meaningful?). Read just the last word of each line; because this is naturally a place of emphasis, use only important, meaningful words in this position.

Take out your reference sheet on “cutting” poems to the essential elements and use it to revise your draft.

3. **Edit.** Check spelling carefully. Be sure your title has a subtitle acknowledging the original you're imitating; this is the difference between an homage and plagiarism!
4. **Publish.** Align, capitalize, punctuation your poem as you decide is meaningful for your poem. Type (single-space) or print a neat final copy in blue or black ink. Turn it in!

**Please do NOT put your name on this assignment. Rather, identify yourself only with your student number.**

**DUE DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

### THE ASSIGNMENT (choose ONE):

**For all poems, focus your diction and imagery to create a specific TONE!**

- A. Write a poem imitating “The Widow’s Lament in Springtime” by William Carlos Williams.
  - Your title will be “The \_\_\_\_\_’s \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_”; fill in the blanks with your own subject.
  - Take a common, “shared language” symbol and turn it upside down the way Williams takes spring– usually a time symbolizing birth, youth, and joy– and uses it as a symbol for death, old age, and sorrow.
  - Create a persona to be the speaker of the poem.
- B. Write a poem imitating “Disillusionment of Ten o’clock” by Wallace Stevens.
  - Your title will be “Disillusionment of \_\_\_\_\_”; fill in the blanks with your own subject (it does NOT need to be a time).
  - Use ambiguous symbols (ones that have dual, possibly contradicting associations like Stevens’ “drunks” and “white nightgowns.”
- C. Write a poem imitating “A Noiseless, Patient Spider” by Walt Whitman.
  - Your title will be “A \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_”; fill in the blanks with your own subject.
  - Choose something that is something important to YOU the way Whitman writes about his poetry. Like Whitman, do not name this thing.
  - Write a first stanza establishing your symbol (the way Whitman sets up the spider and its surroundings, its dilemma).
  - Write a second stanza that partially reveals the symbolic value but only almost explains the true subject of your symbol.
- D. Write a poem imitating “Men at Forty” by Donald Justice.
  - Your title will be “\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_”; fill in the blanks with your own subject.
  - Focus on using symbols that are “shared language” symbols– archetypes with long-held interpretations. Be careful that your poem does not become too obvious or clichéd, though. This requires inventive language and creative lines (see how both Justice and Simon avoid writing a simple, obvious parable of “doors” or “stairs”).